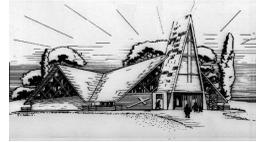




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon - Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 15C)

Jesus came to bring division on earth!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Luke 12, 49-56:

- **ESV 49** "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!
- **50** I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!
- **51** Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.
- **52** For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three.
- **53** They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."
- **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts, give us the right desire for our hearts and let us confess the truth and remain steadfast in Your Word. Amen.*

• **Dear Congregation in Christ!**

- Jesus says He came to bring division on earth rather than peace! Do we know this Jesus? Do we even want to know Him- the real Jesus- not the popular Jesus of our dreams or the one fabricated and embraced by popular Christianity? And it is not a division which has nothing to do with us! It is a very painful one: dividing families!
- So, let's be honest, when we speak about Jesus and what He has done for us, we speak about a very serious thing that happened in the history of mankind and which came into our life too with extremely far-reaching consequences! There is no such thing as Christianity light! In fact Christianity light is most dangerous, because Jesus said, as recorded in the Book of Revelations, that He will spit out those who are lukewarm! When we proclaim Jesus, it is all or nothing! Someone appropriately said, there are only two kinds of people (1) those in whose life the Will of God is fulfilled through Christ (2) those whom God hands over to their own will, namely to be without Jesus, forever!
- Jesus came to accomplish the final division between good and evil! If Jesus wouldn't have fulfilled His baptismal ministry on the cross there would have been no division. Then all would have remained under the wrath of God, forever!

- We have to say it in all clarity: Jesus came to destroy the power of evil over mankind and snatch us out of its grip! Jesus did not come to call "sin" good or to tone down its wickedness! That is not how He saves us. He saves in a much more drastic way, namely through death and resurrection.
- So, the division Jesus brings is good news for those who are united with Him although it means a necessary division from all those who reject Him and His Mission.
- Let us not forget, that this necessary division includes us becoming enemies of our old Selves! Every time we remember our Baptism we also remember the death and burial of our old Adam, and we rejoice about it! Our new life is hidden in Christ! But the tension between old and new is within us! That is why a life in Christ is a continues struggle as long as we remain alive on this earth. There is no such thing as easy, plain sailing for a disciple of Christ!
- This division Jesus brings is highly controversial according to the old evil foe and all his followers! That is why our old Adam always tempts us to return to the highway of self-determination, self-fulfilment, to the popular and politically correct road of accepting all things and all people, the road which eventually leads to the absolute equality of good and evil! That is what the world calls "love"!
- But, this way is directly against what Jesus came to do, in other words the anti-Christ's way, covered up in the name of "love". Jesus came to finally separate good from evil! Don't be deceived by this seemingly good feeling- and good- looking way of earthly love! It is fighting against Jesus and His little flock! It is fighting against the division Jesus brought and brings to this earth!
- Therefore it is crucial that we fight right! How do we fight efficiently against our old Self? We call on Jesus to fight for us! What does He do? He overcomes evil within us by death and resurrection! He, the only sinless and righteous human being, was baptised into death! He became one of us, so much so, that He took your and my place in sin, cursed, and under the wrath of God. So much so that Jesus was in distress about this Baptism. The fire of God's End-time wrath was poured out on Jesus from His Baptism to His death, finally even forsaken by His Father. This goes beyond what we can imagine and think. How is something like this even possible in a Trinity who is LOVE? It certainly shows how deep and genuinely God reaches out to us, His children!

• With every sickness Jesus healed, every sin He forgave, every dead person He raised, He was both releasing creation from its bondage and absorbing into His body all sickness, sin, and death. The division Jesus brought and continues to bring to this earth came at an enormous high price! Jesus gave Himself as the whole burnt offering for the sin of the world! The world which doesn't even see its total depravity, still in denial.

• Peace with the world and its agenda of struggling for harmony between good and evil, trying to root out any divisions between people and their selves would result in eternal death for us! Thank God, Jesus brought division from this crooked way! Thank God, He saw through this deception and ripped us out of this false "love" and baptised us into the death and resurrection of Jesus! This brings the cross at first, but then true agape Love, peace with God and the whole of the Cosmos eventually and finally!

• And cross means suffering in this world and under these divisions. Jesus also wept for Jerusalem, because its inhabitants were refusing to go the path He led!

• In the same way we will suffer because of these necessary divisions which sometimes go straight through families. Many people suffer extremely under this division. Those Christians converting from Islam, in general, are cut-off from their families. In one case the parents of a convert dug a grave and symbolically "buried" their son with tombstone and all.

• In a way what they did confirmed what God did in Baptism: His old Adam, his old identity, was dead and buried now. He said that he had a new family now and is praying that the rest of his old family would also become part of this better living family.

• In the reading of Jeremiah we are reminded of the fact that the OT prophets suffered from the same kind of division. Jeremiah stood alone against numerous smooth-talking, self-acclaimed prophets. They were popular amongst the people, because they had a "positive" message: Nothing will happen to Jerusalem and the temple. God would never allow His temple to be destroyed!

• Jeremiah, on the other hand was sent by God to tell the truth, highly controversial and devastating news: God will come and destroy Jerusalem and the temple because of the wickedness of Judah! Jeremiah wrote lamentations about this suffering, lamenting the fact that the king and his people didn't want to listen to

the uncomfortable truth He was ordained to preach!

- It is and will be no different in the time of the Church, as the consummation of God's final judgement draws nearer. The closer it gets the fiercer people will deny the truth of God's Word. Yet, Christ's little flock, suffering because they are telling the truth and refusing to reunite with the world's agenda will not stand alone. They are part of the timeless family of God stretching through all generations with its Head being the resurrected and living Lord Jesus.

- Instead of engaging in physical warfare they will rather suffer remaining in the truth. They will, by the power of the Holy Spirit, proclaim the Law and Gospel of the Lord, the Law to unrepentant sinners and the Gospel to repentant sinners. And this they will strive to do, motivated by the sacrificial Love of their living Lord.

- Although Jesus brings division it does not mean that He expects His disciples to move out of the world. Jesus explicitly trained His Apostles to reveal the good news of the Gospel which releases souls in bondage. It is good to be part of Jesus' division. In Him true healthy, godly unity and peace is found and certain. In this healthy unity all tears of the past will be wiped away because it is a unity in the truth and a joy too deep for words will break forth.

- **Let us pray:** Dear Lord, keep all of us on the right side of Your division and we pray for those of our biological families who are still in the world, that they may come on Your side through the powerful working of Your Word. Make us willing and use us to sow Your seed, so that they will also be found on Your side on the Last Day. **Amen.**

- *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.*

Amen. (^{ESV} Eph 3,20-21)